

IF LOOKS COULD KILL

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT

They're the sexiest people in the world, but all they wanna do (mostly) in *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* is make war, not love. Angelina Jolie reveals why working with Brad Pitt was all about fun and, on the downside of things for her (and now maybe for him), why she's so bad at relationships...



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Pucker up: the very cool Ms. Jolie



Bad guys wear white: Brad and Angelina as Mr. and Mrs. Smith.

"I'M SO BAD AT RELATIONSHIPS. I'VE BEEN MARRIED TWICE."

Well, she's had her relationship quirks – the blood etched wedding garb, the vials of Billy Bob's haemoglobin around her throat – but they still don't compare to the spy games, gun fights and assorted murder of *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, the \$100 million action knockabout from *Bourne Identity* director Doug Liman. And while the physical manifestations of marital mishap had their therapeutic uses, even pretend marriage was not without its bickering.

"Oh, we had troubles!" she laughs, suggesting that whatever she says, we're not getting the full story. Reported on-set turmoil ranged from Liman refusing to talk to his lead actress and co-star Brad Pitt having to direct her scenes, to the movie running wildly over schedule and budget, to Jolie and Pitt...

"Really, what it came down to," Jolie sighs, "is because the movie is all about marriage, and Doug would be saying, 'Well, in my relationship this would happen...', and we'd all say, 'Fuck you!' And I'd say, 'Well, in my marriage I would never do that.' So you know, everybody had an opinion. But that's healthy."

And as for the budget and schedule strains?

"Well we stopped and started because Brad went to do *Ocean's 12*. He was contractually obliged to go and do that. And then we did a few extra shooting days and saw the film and... it's not like there was anything wrong with it, it was that nice situation where it's actually good and the studio are willing to invest more money to make it even better."

So that's all cleared up then. All well and happy. No big problems, at least none she can't talk her way around with easy charm and a well turned, if slightly questionable, yarn. But there is something nagging away... Oh yes, that other scandal. *Empire* steels itself for a question which, put to most celebrities, would elicit a publicist's huff (she – thankfully – lacks said irritant), a smashing of tape recorder and flash of A-list heel fleeing the room. Did Jolie actually play a part in the destruction of the world's favourite couple by consummating the *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* marriage?

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Angelina Jolie is no stranger to marriage troubles. Two divorces under her belt and an alleged hand in the break-ups of roughly 8,427 other unions (yes, we'll get to *that* one later), her choice to appear in a film about a collapsing marriage – with a side of espionage and pyrotechnics – is either fantastically apt or deliriously stupid.

But that's rather the appeal of Jolie: nothing makes sense. Be it poor movie choices – and there have been many – shouting from the rooftops about shagging or conducting family feuds in the media, she almost seems to invite the hassle that's increasingly piled upon her. Her latest choice is, however, "therapy".

"I'm so bad at relationships," she states, staring down at her coffee. "I've been married twice [to *Johnny Lee Miller* and *Billy Bob Thornton*], and I'm friends with both of them. We had amazing relationships, but we didn't know each other completely. I think most people, at some point, have a relationship with somebody where you think, 'This person doesn't know me, or, I don't know them. This is the extreme of that'."

Angelina Jolie



ANGELINA JOLIE SITS back in her chair. The coffee is put down. She's been expecting this...

"What do you do?" Jolie asks, throwing up her hands, not indignant, not defiant, just resigned. "You just think, God! But you realise what sells papers and what doesn't. It doesn't get on my nerves personally – it gets on my nerves that the press is more focused on superficial things like that, and not on the other shit going on in the world."

It's easy to see where she's coming from. War. Death. Famine. Disease. Pestilence. Tsunamis. Depression. Recession. Brad'n'Angie'n'Jen. When it comes to selling papers and causing headlines, it's no contest.

Apart from a positively bland – and therefore uncharacteristic – platitude ("He's very easy to work with, very professional. It was like having a team-mate amongst all the craziness, which was fun"), Jolie won't be drawn on the

Maddox, whom she adopted while shooting the first *Tomb Raider* movie in Cambodia.

"I'm a soccer mom," she laughs. "But I do believe it's important to not totally change your life. Mad and I, we're mom and the baby, but we're also travelling companions. I travelled with him to Africa and Asia and Cambodia, and we've been in tents, and we also come to L.A. I want him to understand cultures and I want his imagination to be open."

And right now, it seems, no man is going to interfere with this nomadic nirvana. "There are a lot of single mothers I know, who keep accidentally bringing men home and confusing their children. They don't know how to satisfy themselves as women, as sexual beings, and also feel very committed at home."

Jolie, ever creative, has an innovative solution – no strings sex in hotel rooms with obliging male friends. "I went

Above: Brad and Angelina hold back the gossip columnists.

"BRAD'S VERY EASY TO WORK WITH. IT WAS LIKE HAVING A TEAM-MATE."

Pitt-uation. But it should be noted that she has form on the co-star front, having been linked with Colin Farrell, Olivier Martinez (both denied) and former Calvin Klein model and very much female Jenny Shimizu (happily, confirmed). Plus, of course, the two marriages. As she says, she remains friends with her exes, having recently sent Miller to a minefield in Angola for a documentary she's working on (and nothing says "I love you, ex" like a minefield!). But the gossips at large couldn't care less about those worthy adventures, only whether she forced Jennifer Aniston back onto the singles nights circuit...

It'd be fun, but somewhat one-dimensional, if Jolie constantly lived up to this stereotype as a creepy, kooky, spooky, ooky, man-eating sex-mad siren. But, as she slinks towards 30, she's steadily reinventing herself as something of a humanitarian homebody – thanks to three-year-old

through a year and a half of just being a mom and not going near another man, not going to dinner, not having sex," she admits, ignoring the rattle of *Empire's* shaking tea-cup. "And I haven't met someone I'm in love with, but I think sex is healthy, so this is what I found. I don't spend the night. Just for a few hours. You know, I've become great friends with these men, and we share books, we talk about life, we watch the news, and that's lovely. And then, uh..."

A thought crosses *Empire's* mind. This is a hotel. We have hours to kill. She flashes a "don't even think about it, buster" smile and purrs sympathetically. "After this, I have to go to the editing suite". Only the hallowed few get that call, it seems – and that, you might say, is the pits.

>> Mr. and Mrs. Smith is out on June 9 and is reviewed on page 29.

